

ROP Summary Information

(See ADAMS Accession No. ML020530739)

Reactor Oversight Process Summary Information

The NRC provided oversight of 103 operating power reactors using the Reactor Oversight Process (ROP). NRR examined summary results of its ROP to determine whether it could identify any trends in the ROP's assessment of licensee performance. In particular, the staff examined trends in the number of plants in each column of the NRC's Action Matrix.

On average, approximately 75% of the plants were listed in the Licensee Response column of the ROP Action Matrix, which corresponds to the baseline level of NRC oversight. The chart below shows trends in the numbers of plants that are listed in the Regulatory Response, Degraded Cornerstone, Multiple/repetitive Degraded Cornerstone, and Unacceptable Performance columns of the Action Matrix, which correspond to increasing levels of regulatory engagement with the licensee. A trend of degrading performance would be one that shows a migration of plants from the Licensee Response Column to one of the other columns in the Action Matrix. Although the chart appears to show this sort of trend, the staff believes that this trend can be attributed to several factors associated with initial start up of the ROP as discussed below.

Action Matrix Trends

Apr 2000 - Dec 2001

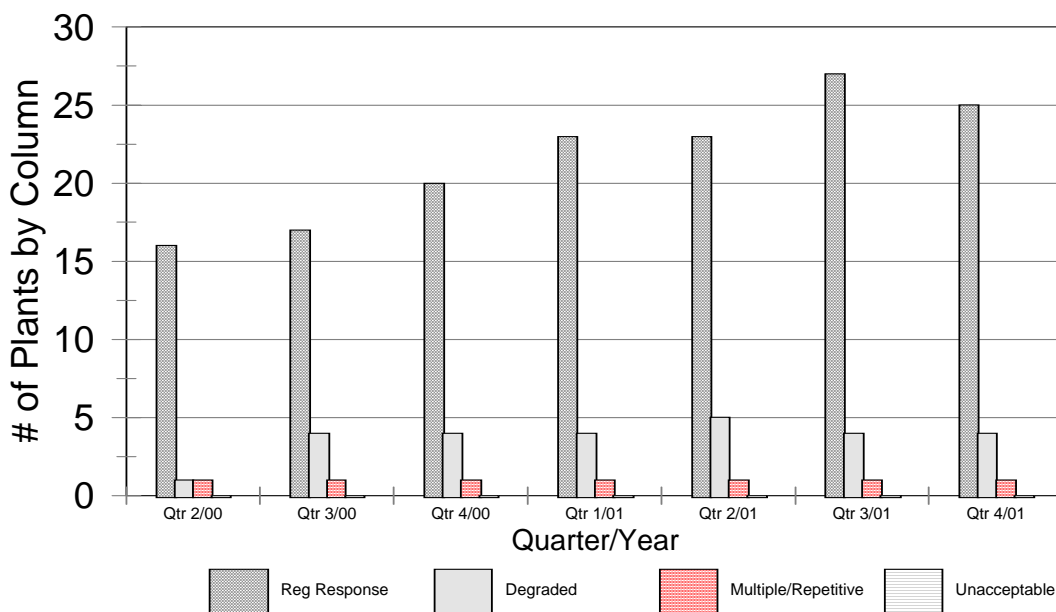


Figure A4-1

Notes for Figure A4-1:

1. This chart includes DC Cook units 1 and 2 beginning in Q2/2001.
2. Data current through March 18, 2002.

The ROP was intended to improve the focus of both licensees and NRC staff on the more risk-significant aspects of licensee performance. The staff has continued to work with industry to improve the ROP since initial implementation, such as enhancements to its risk-informed inspection procedures, improved SDP Phase 2 notebooks, and improvements to the guidance for performance indicators. These ongoing improvements, as well as increasing familiarity with the ROP, have likely enhanced the ability of both the NRC and licensees to identify the most risk-significant aspects of licensee performance.

A second factor contributing to an apparent increase in the number of plants in the Regulatory Response Column is that inspection findings that are determined to have greater than very low safety significance (green) are counted for 4 quarters when determining the appropriate column of the Action Matrix for licensees. Thus, for at least the first 4 quarters from the date of initial implementation of the ROP on April 2, 2000, the number of plants moving out of the Licensee Response Column has increased as inspection findings are accrued by plants under the ROP.

The chart shows an apparent drop in the number of plants in the Regulatory Response Column in the 4th quarter of 2001. However, the 4th quarter numbers will likely increase as the preliminary assignments of the significance of inspection findings in inspection reports are finalized using the Significance Determination Process (SDP). Final SDP results are generally not available until several months after the findings are identified, and are then used as an input to the Action Matrix for the period in which the performance issues occurred.